

# Perspectives on Interprofessional Ethics Education within Obstetrics/Gynecology



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## Background

- Purpose: To examine the educational exposure, knowledge gaps, and clinical experience regarding reproductive ethics among physician assistants (PAs) working in reproductive healthcare.
- Residents and PAs often work collaboratively, together caring for patients and navigating a myriad ethical challenges
- Prior research on Ob/Gyn residents' experiences with ethically challenging situation demonstrates:
  - Limited training and desire for more formal education
  - Lack of comfort<sup>1</sup>
- Comparable research for PAs is lacking, despite ARC-PA statement: "The curriculum must include instruction in the principles and practice of medical ethics."<sup>2</sup>
- A recent Dephi consensus panel recommended development of inter professional ethical education curricula for PA students and medical trainees<sup>3</sup>

## Methods

- Eleven semi-structured interviews conducted with PAs in an urban academic Ob/Gyn department
- Interviews focused on:
  1. Ethics exposure during formal education
  2. Preparedness for addressing ethically challenging situations
  3. Clinical experiences with such situations and their approaches to resolution
  4. Additional training needs

- Analysis employed through grounded theory using Atlas/Ti qualitative software

## Results

**All physician assistants reported feeling inadequately trained and the majority felt unprepared to address ethically challenging situations at the time of the interview.**

### Lack of Formal Education

*I think it's a very generalized training like they don't really go into specific just because there's not that much time. I feel like the most I learned was when I started the job.*

*I don't even think it was a full day...just had a couple of lectures. It wasn't like too memorable.*

### Difficulty determining role in ethically challenging situations

*We are not the ultimate decision makers.*

*I don't think I ever find myself in a position to independently have to make those decisions.*

*...with more education I could step up into more of that decision making role."*

### Relationship to Ob/Gyn Residents

*Our educational backgrounds are slightly different. Some of the PAs have been here for years and would have a much different lens.*

*I think that a lot of our day to day is very similar to the day to day of the residents, you know we have different jobs, different goals and different titles...*

*...having the same base of knowledge from which to work*

## Discussion

- Similar to OB/Gyn, PAs describe training limitations and discomfort addressing ethically challenging situations
- Recognized similarities in day-to-day responsibilities compared to residents
- Endorsed the need for additional training and supported joint PA-Resident Curriculum
- Next steps include implementing a reproductive ethics based curriculum on topics frequently encountered within the department of Ob/Gyn including the patient-provider relationship, maternal-fetal dyad, and end-of-life decision making

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## References

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